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Attitudes Towards Social Media Regarding Age

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A Proposal for The Perceived Effects and Attitudes of Social Media with Age

PSY 4370 – Psychology of Aging Capstone (Spring 2020)

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Abstract

Social media has increasingly worked its way into the everyday lives of individuals from a vast array of ages and backgrounds. Notably, the perceived effects and attitudes towards social media vary with age. Through this proposed study, attitudes and feelings towards social media from 80 individuals, across four age groups, will be compiled from the Mercer and Auglaize county area via survey. An explanation from every participant explaining how social media affects their lives will be provided. From the responses, a better understanding of how social media is perceived to affect society, as well as it's perceived effect on the participants will be documented. It is predicted that older individuals will have a predominantly negative view of social media, and that younger individuals will have mixed feelings towards it. This study will illustrate how individuals across numerous age ranges residing in the Mercer and Auglaize county area view social media.

Introduction

The use of social media has found its way into the lives of individuals from a vast array of ages. It has only come forth in the last couple of decades and has been growing in popularity since. By now, there are individuals who have grown up using social media, and those who did not. Attitudes towards social media may differ depending on age and/or simply be attributed to growing up in a time period where it was present. Knowing this, previous research on social media has been conducted to understand how it influences people's lives. More recently, studies have been carried out to better analyze how individuals themselves find social media playing a part throughout their day.

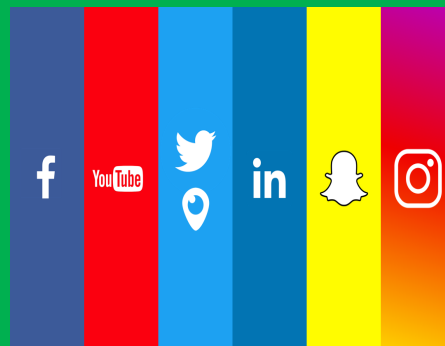
With this proposed study, insight into how residents of Mercer and Auglaize counties feel about social media, as well as their attitudes regarding it will be reported. It is hypothesized that most older individuals will view social media as only being negative, while younger participants will have mixed feelings towards it. Understanding how people frame its purpose in their day to day lives, as well as their attitudes towards it, will help inspire future research. From this, a greater knowledge base will continue to grow, and people will be able to take a more educated approach to gauging their use.

How social media impacts the lives of individuals is important, but the perceived effects and feelings towards it also warrant proper examination. Current research in this area includes a study conducted by Karakaya and colleagues (2018). Among the findings, Karakaya and colleagues (2018) concluded via a Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detector (CHAID) analysis the dream job of the student, specifically that of a doctor or engineer, coincided with a more positive view of social media (p. 29). Factors such as desire to continue education and enthusiasm towards school were deemed what influences a high or low dream job.

One of the concerns revolving around social media is a lack of in-person friends. The worry is that with young individuals spending much of their time online, this will negate their ability to form friendships the traditional way. To better understand this phenomenon, Kesici (2019) sought out to understand the relationship between social students and their social media use. Upon analyzing the results, they were able to conclude that YouTube use was associated with the sociability of the students. More specifically, students who used YouTube frequently were more social than those using it a little or never (p. 129). This hints that individuals who are social in a virtual aspect are social in the traditional ways as well.

Much like anything becoming a part of the daily routines of many, the notion of phones and social media having addicting aspects has been brought up. Kanbul and colleagues (2019) sought out to investigate this question as well as the attitudes individuals possess regarding social media and phone use. For the study, Kanbul utilized preschool students' parents. Of the participant pool, nearly 70% used social media (p. 188). Kanbul and colleagues (2019) also found gender differences; males felt safer with their phone and were more addicted to using it (p. 188). Additionally, it was concluded that participants who were 40 years old or older held lower attitudes towards technology use for themselves, as well as their children (p.188). This study adds to existing research that the use of social media is widespread.

Knowing there was limited research dedicated to collecting extensive feedback from older individuals regarding social media, Xie and colleagues (2012) set out to do just that. Upon initially interviewing the participants, Xie and colleagues (2012) found that they unanimously held negative opinions towards social media (p. 286). Cyberbullying and gossip were noted as being popular reasons for the disinterest. Despite this, all participants were eager to at least learn about social media, as all of them were inexperienced. Through a predetermined agenda, the participants learned about social media and its various uses. By the end of the study, Xie and colleagues (2012) concluded that participants came to view social media in a more positive light.



Predicted Results

This proposed experiment will elicit reliable results and provide information on the attitudes regarding social media as felt by residents of the Mercer and Auglaize counties. The sample of 80 participants are representative of a population of 85,000 individuals. By randomly selecting individuals for the study, a wide variety of participants will be used. This will allow the findings to be generalized to the best of their ability. A correlational analysis will be used to compare age with attitudes towards social media. The responses of the participants will be quantified, as explained earlier, and this will provide the necessary ratio data to run a total of five tests. This will be carried out utilizing Pearson's correlation test. This will elicit a coefficient (r) and indicate the strength of the association between the overall age of the individuals and their attitude towards social media. Furthermore, four additional comparisons will be made across age groups. Specifically, four tests will be examining the strength of the associations between the ages of individuals in each group, and their attitudes regarding social media. It is predicted that younger individuals will have mixed feelings regarding social media and that older individuals will have a predominantly negative view of social media. The former would be indicated by a weak correlation, and the latter by a strong negative correlation. Alternatively, the older population may consist of enough individuals towards the "younger" side of the cutoff and elicit results like that of the previous age groups. In other words, if the hypothesis is correct, and many individuals in the fourth age group are just over the age of 52 but not much older than that, then more positive comments and attitudes towards social media may be present.



Methods

Participants

For the proposed study, 80 individuals will be used from the Mercer and Auglaize county area to answer questions regarding their attitudes towards social media. Their primary incentive for participating is to aid in the collection of research that can potentially benefit the community. The variables under examination are the age of the participants, the age group they make up, and their feelings towards social media. There will be four age groups. The first will consist of individuals 13-25 years old, the second will be 26-38 years old, the third will be 39-51 years old, and the final group will be individuals 52 and older. There will be 20 participants sought after for each age group. Their birthdate will be asked, and this will determine which group they fall into. The survey will be distributed via phone call until 20 individuals are found for each group. Parents of individuals from the first group may be initially contacted to reach those in the former part of that age range. Parental permission will first be required before the research questions will be asked to any minors still living with their parents. If administering the survey via phone call is not yielding enough participants in a timely manner, hard copies will be printed and handed out to individuals at sanctioned events in the area. A variety of events would be used, as well as events deemed to attract a vast array of people. Local sporting events, activities held at the YMCA, and the festivals held in nearby cities during the summer are just a few examples of potential in-person places hard copies could be handed out.

Materials and Procedure

The survey will be acquiring an explanation of how each participant feels social media affects their lives by utilizing a series of questions. More specifically, individuals will be answering ten questions crafted to yield unambiguous answers. The responses will be compared within each group, and this will allow for a look into the variability among individuals of the same age. This will potentially elicit a majority answer for the perceived attitude towards social media, as well as how most individuals feel towards social media within their age group. The responses will be evaluated based on an individual's positive or negative comments regarding social media. A positive comment will be given a +1, and a negative a -1. If an individual has both a positive and negative feeling about social media, these will cancel out and equate a score of 0. Each person will be given a score after careful review of their responses. A negative score will be indicative of negative feelings towards social media, and a positive score will be indicative of positive feelings towards social media. A score of 0 will represent having both positive and negative feelings towards social media. The larger the scores, either positive or negative, will indicate stronger feelings towards their respective directions.

Discussion

The proposed study aims to further investigate the attitudes and feelings individuals hold regarding social media. It is predicted that a strong negative correlation will be present among older participants. This would suggest that with increasing age, an individual will view social media more negatively. Because it is such a broad topic, and can be utilized for a variety of purposes, it is vital to grasp how social media is viewed across the lifespan. Additionally, this proposed study leaves room for future research.

It is important to understand how people view social media given its widespread adoption of use. With its continued implementation, it's equally as important to see if these viewpoints vary with age. With a better understanding of people's perceptions of social media, studies can be conducted to investigate what can be done to improve people's social media experience. Given its multipurpose nature, and frequent use, understanding what type of platform is desired by certain age groups will allow individuals to more easily reap the benefits it has to offer. With increased knowledge on how various age groups feel towards social media, a better understanding of the perceived affects it has on society will be found. From this, the role of social media will be increasingly understood, as well as its level of acceptance across various age ranges.

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